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VIVIEN ZHANG

張月薇

Written by Alan Chan //
Translated into Chinese by Phoebe Cheng //
Image courtesy of Galerie Huit

The works of Vivien Zhang are highly self-conscious reflections on the state of painting as a means to communicate. In her paintings trompe l'oeil, abstract shapes and big areas of brushworks coexist with each other. There are elements that are easy to recognise as with those that we are given clues which seemingly lead to somewhere and nowhere at once. She has deliberately constructed a complicated networks of references and contradictions to sustain a conversation that is specific to the tradition of painting. Born in Beijing, Zhang has lived in Nairobi, Bangkok and the United Kingdom since her childhood. The ambiguous identities of and relations between the composites in the paintings serve as a metaphor for the artist to reflect on this sense of displacement, of always being between one place and another, of a sense of identity set loose from anchors.

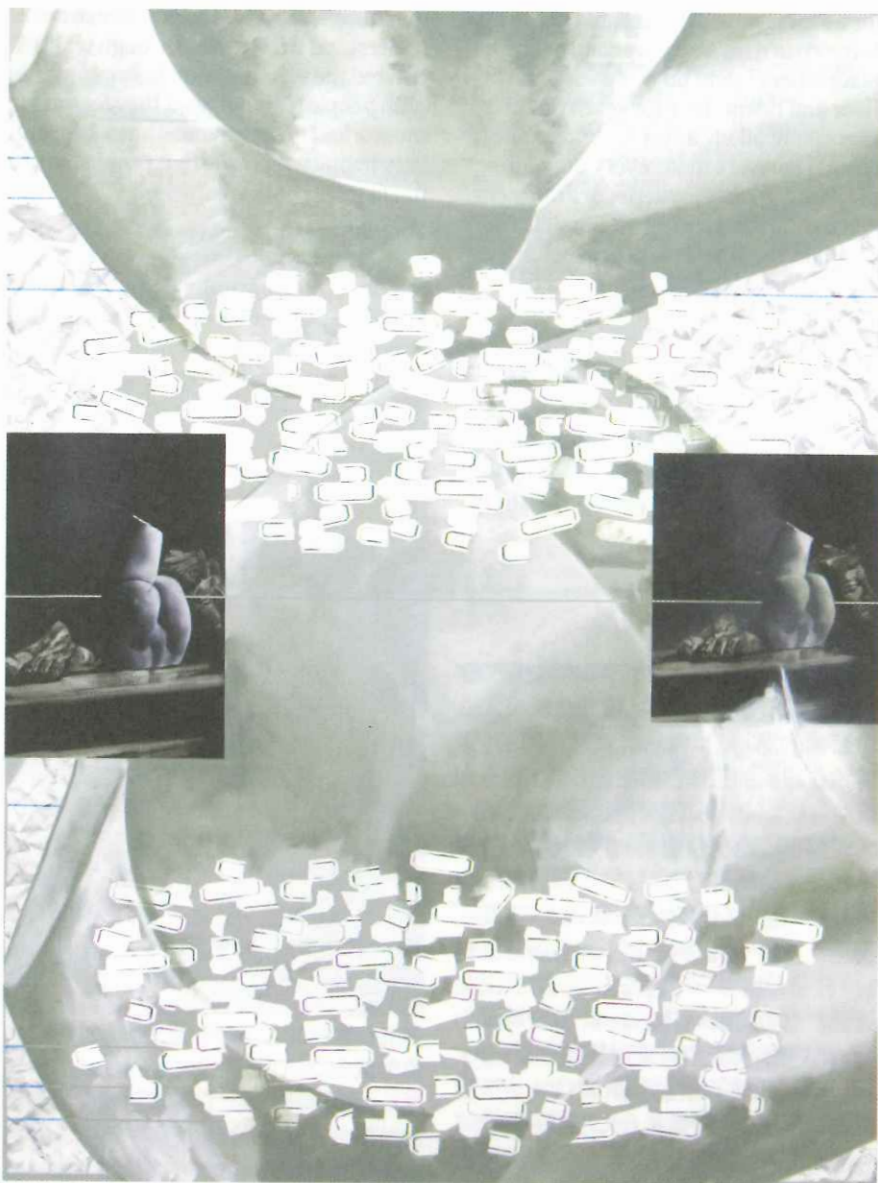
Her first solo exhibition in Hong Kong 'Cavity Drift' in Galerie Huit carries a vigorous air of focus. The works do not make themselves easy as each of the paintings is a maze of guesswork that demands a lot of attention on their painterly details. Of course one is free to surrender to the works and walk away, but this is the great thing about her works - they succeed very much in making one feels bad about giving up on each game of looking and thinking.

Zhang's works hinge on the use of trompe l'oeil and the tradition of abstract painting, they are two different modes of conceiving the communicatory function of painting that appeared at

different moments of the history of art. In *Collidoscope* the trompe l'oeil of aluminium foils is more than a visual clue that tricks the eyes - it at the same time puts illusionism itself as one of the subjects of her works, just as the trails of brushworks refer to the physical state of the painting surface. By incorporating them together in individual works, she makes the various moments and categories within the tradition of painting themselves the subjects of her conversation.

In many of her works the very surfaces of the paintings have been repeatedly

referred to, comparable to an actor revealing his self-consciousness as an actor in the act itself. In *Double Bloom*, swarms of adhesive labels are painted, creating a short-circuit of the painting's representational function by referring to the literal physicality of painting itself. Between two painted replicas of Horst P Horst's photos of neo-classical carvings - one slightly bigger than the other - a horizontal line at the middle of the painting passes through the two photos but singled out the two marble carvings in the photos by passing behind them. Everything seems to be invested with



Vivien Zhang
Double Bloom
2015, oil and acrylic on canvas

的魅力恰恰顯示於此，因為要是在觀賞和推敲中途放棄，必然會心有不甘。

張氏的作品糅合錯視畫法 (trompe l'oeil) 和抽象繪畫的傳統，而這兩種創作手法各自代表油畫在歷史上不同時期的溝通功能。萬花筒的鉛箔不單是障眼法的元素，更將「幻真」變成中心主題，正如筆繪的痕跡可以對照畫作表層的實質狀態。通過並置兩者，她將年代和類型的差異變成繪畫傳

張月薇的作品，反映創作人對畫作狀態傳遞信息的功能有強烈意識。她在錯視畫作中讓抽象圖形和粗大的筆繪並存。有些元素很容易辨認，卻也有些彷彿提供了線索，卻只有令人更摸不著頭腦。那是刻意建構的複雜網絡，一方面援引例子，另一方面顛覆慣例，在熟悉繪畫傳統的觀眾之間延續對話。張氏生於北京，從孩提開始先後旅居於肯亞奈洛比、曼谷和英國。模糊的身份和畫作元素之間的模糊關係成為藝術家的比喻，映照唐突感、置身異地，和失卻立足地的身份。

張月薇首次在香港錦藝舫舉行的個人展覽題為《空隙·漂移》。整個展覽凝聚著一股專注的氣息。作品並不容易解讀，每一幅畫作都是個謎題，催使觀眾細味筆觸的細節。當然，觀眾可以隨時放棄，但是她作品

an illusionism – a single abstract line on one part of the painting passes through into a photo to gain a physical quality. By dividing her paintings into zones of different functions, Zhang undermines and contradicts any easy assumption about the orders of appearances of things.

In *Lapse* a grid of blue lines divide the paintings equally into squares, each of which is depicted 'something' which is difficult to make out. They hint at something like an x-ray print of a fractured bone, or some black and white photos of some furry things, or something glimmering from far away in the dark. These grids certainly resemble each other in their appearances, they even hint at a cinematic progression in time across the grids. However a touch of brushwork that goes underneath the blue lines and across into several squares contradicts this cinematic reading of an unfolding of events – it is a brushwork that is conscious of itself appearing as a brushwork. This is the humour of Zhang's painting, she leaves cues that in a single moment invert the rules of game. Perhaps all those squares

should be seen as a group of *trompe l'oeil* of different brushworks, that the contradiction of the painting is to be seen as a parody on the Cartesian grid that is overly invested with scientific rationality to dictate how we read the painting.

In many of her works, elements appear in repetition to establish themselves as specific visual vocabularies that follow the rule local to the ground of each individual work. In *Fans* and *Gom bonbon*, repetition works to contradict the seeming randomness of the selection of shapes – if what have been chosen to be represented is haunted by inescapable randomness, it can be balanced off by establishing their specificity by repetition within the frame of painting.

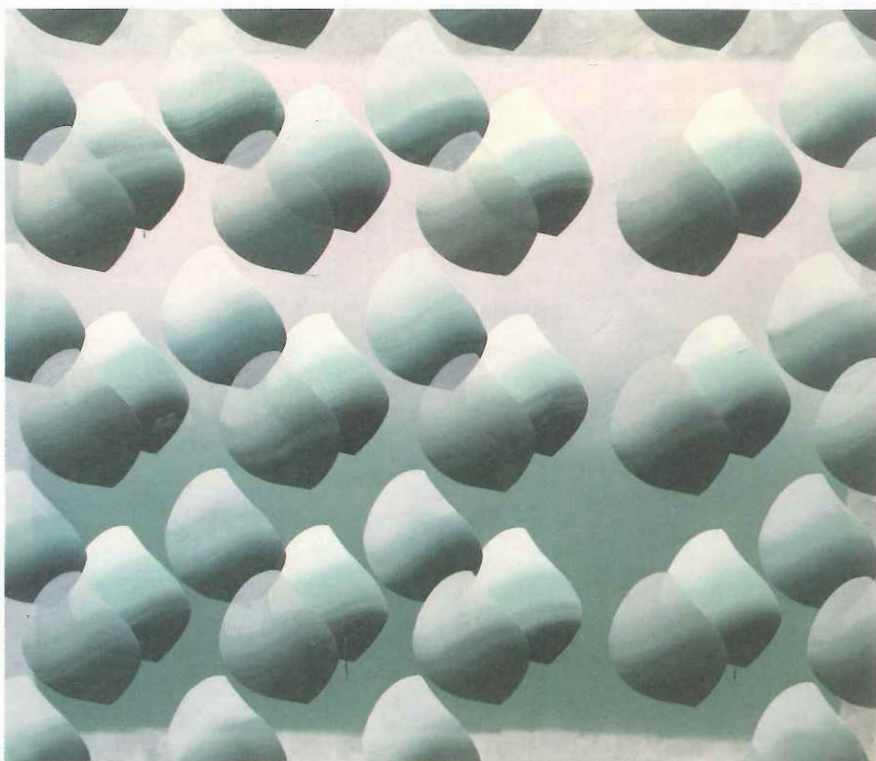
In Zhang's work, there registers a need for a poetic space that allows many oppositional forces to coexist, nothing is easily abandoned or resigned to stability which will be the end of game. What is precious about Zhang's paintings is that they do not ask questions with a predetermined answer; they do not insist on agreement or disagreement before the convening of a conversation with her viewers. In view of the nihilism and the resignation to stylistic values that plague contemporary art, such as those dubbed if not christened as Zombie Formalism which operates under a 'take it or leave it' morality, Zhang's work lights up a space wherein the feeling of ambiguity leads to the questions of art, as it should be that way.

Vivien Zhang

張月薇

Vivien Zhang was born in Beijing, China in 1990. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in London with a MA in painting. Before that she studied BA Fine Art at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, in London. She currently lives and works in London.

張月薇1990年生於中國北京，畢業於倫敦皇家藝術學院的繪畫文學碩士課程，之前在倫敦的斯萊德藝術學院取得藝術文學碩士，現工作及居住於倫敦。



Vivien Zhang
Gom-bonbon
2015, oil on canvas

統的對話題目。

她的好些畫作都參照了作品本身，如同一個演員流露作為演繹劇本者的自我意識。雙重綻放的大量標籤貼子用畫作的實質作為參照，令繪畫向來的代表功能造成短路。在兩幅赫斯特拍攝新經典雕塑的複製本之間，一條水平的線貫穿大小兩幅畫作，卻繞過了大理石雕刻，取道由「背後」經過。作品每一處都注入了幻象元素，抽象的線由畫作延伸到照片裡頭，變得有真實感。通過將畫作分割成帶有不同功能的區域，張氏既削弱，亦顛覆對事物表面規律的任何淺白假設。

《間隔》由藍色線分割成均等的方格，每

格都描繪著難以言喻的「東西」。好像是 X 光下的斷骨，或一些毛茸茸物件的黑白照，又或在遠處的黑暗隱隱發光的東西。這些方格在外觀上很相近，甚至暗示映像之間有時間推移。只是，一段遊走在框線以下、跨越幾塊方格的筆觸，令人不得不放棄前述的電影式解讀。一段顯示作為筆觸自我意志的筆觸反映張氏的幽默感。她留下的提示往往在剎那間扭轉遊戲規則。或許所有方格都應該視為不同筆觸製造的幻景，而畫作的矛盾，或許是對笛卡兒式格網的戲虐，諷刺學派依賴科學邏輯理解繪畫。

張月薇有很多作品的元素都在作品中不斷重複，成為該幅作品的規則下獨有的視覺詞彙。扇和岡果果的重複規律，打破圖案

全為隨機選擇的猜想。如果經刻意選擇的元素擺脫不了隨機的本質，以重複方式建構這些元素在畫框中的獨特性就可以重整平衡。

張氏的作品點出具詩意的空間甚為重要，因為此等空間能夠兼容對立的力量，假若拒絕保存、歸於單一，一切就會歸於無有。她作品珍貴在於不提出任何有既定答案的問題，而在觀眾聚集討論的過程中也從不執著於認同或反對。當代藝術充斥虛無主義和風格至上的價值觀，例如沒有受洗的統統被冠以「接不接受由你」的殭屍形式主義。張氏的作品點亮了另一處空間，容讓模糊的感覺引導藝術探索，只因藝術本應如此。